

Letter to Editor

The Drawdown Asymmetry

This is my first comment since retiring from the US Air Force in 1984. I just read Lt Col “Q” Hinote’s article “The Drawdown Asymmetry: Why Ground Forces Will Depart Iraq but Air Forces Will Stay.” Colonel Hinote tells an important story in a superior way—it is a story that must gain wide exposure.

The national debate has become centered on how we MUST get the US military out of Iraq as soon as possible. I can think of few things that would be more detrimental for our nation’s interests. Certainly, we need to draw down as the situation permits, but to cave in to pressure without considering the strategic implications for our country and for our partners and allies would dishonor the sacrifices our brave countrymen and women have made to remove an evil, corrupt, and sadistic regime from power. A precipitous pullout could leave the brave Iraqis who have begun a democratic experiment to suffer even further disgraces at the hands of insurgents and those who would return Iraq to despotic rule.

This is no time for polarizing language—the issue is not one of “holding the line” versus “defeatism.” Rather it should be about our national leaders making a strategic decision by carefully weighing our interests and responsibilities in the region and with respect to the Iraqi people against the costs in terms of military capabilities and national treasure. While no one wants to see our young men and women put in harm’s way, it is a mission that today’s professional Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines have signed up to do as willing volunteers. They are the most recent manifestation of a long line of great generations of Americans who are defending our country far from home while bringing hope for a democratic society to a nation that has known nothing but oppression, dictatorship, and warfare for 30 or more years.

Colonel Hinote carefully makes a case that is not getting to the US public. Somehow this vital information must receive wider attention. He has placed the situation in Iraq in the proper strategic context, he has realistically portrayed our responsibilities to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government, and he has identified the long-term costs to our nation and our Air Force.

I congratulate Colonel Hinote for his excellent strategic analysis and *Strategic Studies Quarterly* for providing a forum for such a vital discussion.

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